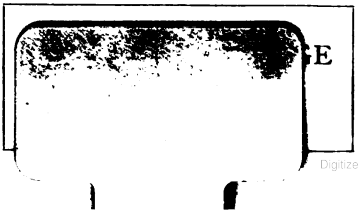
Selborne

The Temple Topographies

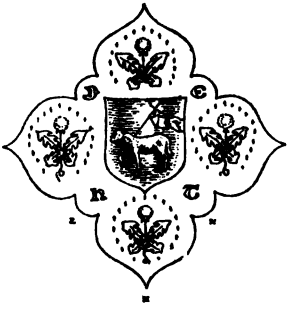
Dutton

Herbert W. Tompkins

Samuel Henshaw



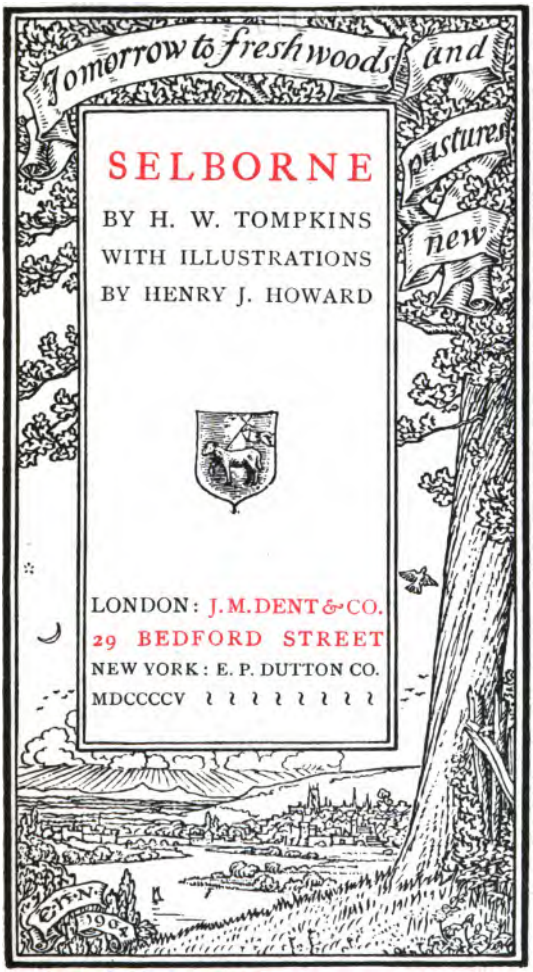
The Temple



Topographies

Selborne

from the Hanger.



SELBORNE

BY H. W. TOMPKINS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BY HENRY J. HOWARD

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NOTE

In preparing this little book I have been much indebted to the labour of others. I have gleaned a sheaf here and there in many fields, and to cite all my authorities would be to name a long list of books. I must, however, mention my debt to two volumes on "Hampshire," by Mr. G. A. B. Dewar and Dr. J. C. Cox respectively; to Grant Allen's edition of White's "Natural History of Selborne" and to Prof. Bell's edition of White's correspondence. Nor can I omit to thank Mr. Edmund H. New for MS. notes and other valuable assistance, or to take this opportunity of drawing attention to an article entitled "Selborne Revisited," by Mr. W. H. Hudson, first published in *Longman's Magazine*, March 1902.

Verulam, Southend-on-Sea,
April 1905.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

MR. ANDREW LANG, in one of his many books, utters a wish doubtless cherished by readers from very early times. "No gift," he writes, "would be more enviable than the visionary power of seeing the departed generations in their costumes as they lived, concerned with the many trivial accidents that were things of habit to them, and that now have passed wholly out of the existence which we know." We could wish, in a word, to revivify the dead past, perhaps desiring to

> "See great Diocletian walk
> In the Salonian garden's noble shade;"

or, it may be, to call up some sweeter spirits, dear to us in the pages of history—"dear to God and famous to all ages"—whose deeds we cherish in our memories, and whose

books—if bookmen they were—we know so intimately and love so well.

Such a wish, rather than any other, is in the heart of the present writer as he commences this book on Selborne—its aspect, its memories, its church, its neighbourhood. Nor need he apologise for this wish. Of the many who pen their impressions of Selborne, in newspaper, magazine, or volume, few do so without showing that their interest in the subject resolves itself, in the long run, into an interest in Gilbert White. His book it was that first urged us to go on pilgrimage through the diversified landscape of Hampshire until we came to the shrine we sought—the village where he passed so many years, the village that he knew and loved as he knew and loved no other, and where he was laid to rest when his eyes could no longer observe nor his pen record. Perhaps we have too little rather than too much hero-worship amongst us; perhaps we should grow nobler and wiser if we more often went on pilgrimage, or more sedulously cultivated a spirit of reverence towards the memory of men who, more reverent than we, served their day and generation faithfully ere they fell on sleep.

Such an one was White of Selborne. He enjoys a fame almost unique in our annals. It can hardly be compared, in kind, with the fame of any other writer, ancient, mediæval, or modern. He was a

man of one book—the "Antiquities," as readers will remember, was originally bound up in the same volume as the "Natural History." Consider that book's shortcomings. It is of small value as a work on ornithology, of which it largely treats. We do not turn to it when studying the problems of migration, any more than we turn to the "Compleat Angler" when we would fain lure a carp to the landing net. It is a sort of Apocrypha: we all read it, as we all read Walton, but we do not apply it to establish any doctrine. And yet, perhaps, it is akin to Scripture too, so lovingly has it been conned by generations that have cared to observe and meditate, to take knowledge of time and season, of coming and going; generations that studied to be quiet. We remember the freshness and delight of our first perusal, as Huxley remembered the freshness and delight with which he first read Carlyle in the cabin of the *Rattlesnake* on far distant seas.

The addition of a volume on Selborne to the Temple Topographies suggests a reflection. The evolution of topographical literature forms an interesting chapter in the history of books. To the old county histories, largely concerned with the extent and value of manors, from Domesday downwards, the last few decades have added a literature of lighter touch, in which men strive to express something of the charm of the country-side; something of the daily

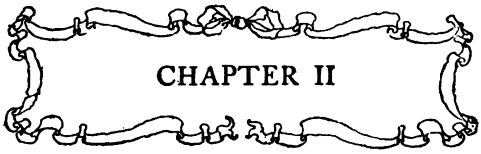
life of their ancestors or contemporaries; something of those myths and customs dear to their sires or cherished by themselves. To Dugdale and Chauncy and Morant we have added Mr. Baring Gould and Mr. Hissey, Mr. Harper and Mr. Ditchfield—almost as valuable as chroniclers, and far more interesting when we draw the curtain and wheel our chair to the fireside, or more handy when we desire their companionship on highway and byway. The whirligig of time brings about its revenges, in this as in so much else. After contending for the dignity of history, we are reverting to the gossipy manner of Herodotus and Mandeville. In future, as sometimes recently, we shall write what Mr. Herbert Paul styles "colossal fragments" rather than whole histories. As historians, we shall write of epochs rather than of centuries; as topographers, we shall describe villages rather than nations.

After all, this is surely very natural. As decade after decade goes by, as

> "All things are taken from us, and become
> Portions and parcels of the *pleasant* past,"

the mass of local history and tradition grows, and the records of even a tiny hamlet may fill no inconsiderable volume. Hence, if we would preserve what is of interest in the annals of human life, it becomes necessary, as the days go by, that we set ourselves to gather up the fragments ere they become

"forgotten lore" indeed. Of the making of books there will be no end; but this need alarm nobody. Posterity, as heretofore, will sort and choose, and he who writes what is useless will soon be deservedly forgotten.



CHAPTER II

THE VILLAGE

SELBORNE, a small village near the Surrey border, lies in a wooded valley, remote from the more historical highways of Hampshire. Lying, as Mr. Hudson has remarked, "in a kind of trough at the foot of a wall-like hill," the distant view of it is picturesque. Visitors from London may book either to Liss or Alton. If to Liss the train, after leaving Guildford, winds through varied, rolling country, green with birch and beech,—through leafy Godalming, through Hazelmere, and near Hindhead, where Tyndall analysed the air he breathed and Grant Allen made his home upon the hilltop. Then, as you continue your journey towards the south-west, you leave upon your left "green Sussex fading into blue," and presently pass Liphook, once a familiar stage on the journey from Portsmouth to London, and famous for its "Anchor" inn, where Blucher lunched in the year of Waterloo. The next station is Liss. The walk from Liss to Selborne, by way of St. Peter's church and Nore Hill, is more full of beauty than the walk from Alton. Under

the shadow of Nore Hill you may gather purple orchis in the lush meadows; the sweet woodruff blossoms profusely on the banks; the voices of many birds are with you all the way. Well may Mr. Dewar write, "I scarcely know of such sylvan loveliness of a romantic character in any other part of Hampshire."

Black 187? should be in quotation marks. cf. p. 45.

This sylvan loveliness was noted and described by Mr. Richard Le Gallienne when first he set out upon his "Travels in England." It drew, indeed, another prose-fancy from his pen. He compared the billowy undulations of the landscape to Atlantic rollers "suddenly struck stationary, as at the stopping of a tune." It seemed to him that those high ridges were tree-topped land-waves, with intervening troughs of green meadow-grass. "It is a country," he adds, "of green hill and green hollow sharply alternating, full of fascinating nooks and turns and swift sweeps of steep lawn."

Or, as I have said, you may approach Selborne from Alton, a small market-town about five and a half miles from the village. Here, on December 18, 1762, Gibbon, as Captain of Militia, treated his company to "some beer at roll calling, which they received with great cheerfulness and decency." By this route Selborne is approached from the north; several streamlets are passed, and presently you see the beech-clad Hanger, one of the most famous wooded hills in the whole of England. Beneath it stretches

the village, "the inalienable property of Gilbert White," as Mr. H. S. Salt has so justly said. A glance shows that the heavily-thatched cottages of White's day are largely

A Selborne Interior

interspersed with new buildings of red brick, with slated roofs. But many of older date remain, thoroughly typical of those cottages so familiar in our English landscapes. We know and love each feature, especially when, as Mr. Lang sings, "Summer is Queen in

the length of the land,"—the open doorway, the tiny windows, the thatch where the sparrows wrangle, the faggots at the back-door, the cobbled pathway from the wicket gate, the roses that climb the front and peep at the higher casement. At Selborne the homes of slate and brick were for the most part built quite recently. Mrs. Meynell, in "The Wares of Autolycus" (1897) could write: "The Hampshire village . . . is unaltered—a street of deep-roofed cottages, tiled and thatched, timbered in black and white, or adorned with herring-bone brickwork, or with the simple, white-washed, unwindowed gable-side, bright against a bright cloud—all hemmed in with flowers that crowd by the street-side." It is easy to lament the decay or destruction of those cottage homes of England; it is wiser to regard their disappearance as inevitable, and to strive to make their successors equally charming.

Detailed description will hardly be sought in this little book; but many matters may be touched lightly, if only to show the rambler where to look more closely for himself. In Selborne there is no exact counterpart of the village green; but its place is largely filled by the Plestor, a grassy quadrangle at the north end of the village, near the road to Alton and almost beneath the shadow of St. Mary's church. It is crossed by cobbled paths and shaded by a sycamore with a seat around its trunk. The spot was for cen-

turies occupied by a vast oak with a "short squat body and huge horizontal arms extending almost to the extremity of the area." But in 1702 occurred that tempest which must surely have equalled a tropical hurricane in violence, and which Macaulay graphically describes in his article on Addison. The oak in the Plestor fell; the vicar and his parishioners spent much money and labour in their endeavours to—as White puts it—"set it in its place again," but the tree withered and died. The "Plestor," signifying *play-stow* or playing-place, is of great antiquity; it was given to the neighbouring Priory by Sir Adam Gurdon in the year 1271, at which time, as White thought, the Prior probably planted in its midst the oak tree mentioned. The Plestor is not large, but generations of children have played upon it and their sires have met there to gossip, "the young contending while the old surveyed." White records that prior to about 1756 there stood, at the south corner of the Plestor, an oddly-shaped tree, long regarded by the villagers as a shrew-ash. In those days it was believed that if a shrew-mouse crept over the limbs of a cow or other animal such limbs were at once affected, and their use might be lost. But a remedy was found—or rather invented. A hole was bored in the ash, and a shrew-mouse immured therein, probably "with quaint incantations long since forgotten." Henceforth the twigs of the tree, gently applied

THE PLESTOR

to the affected limb, afforded prompt relief!

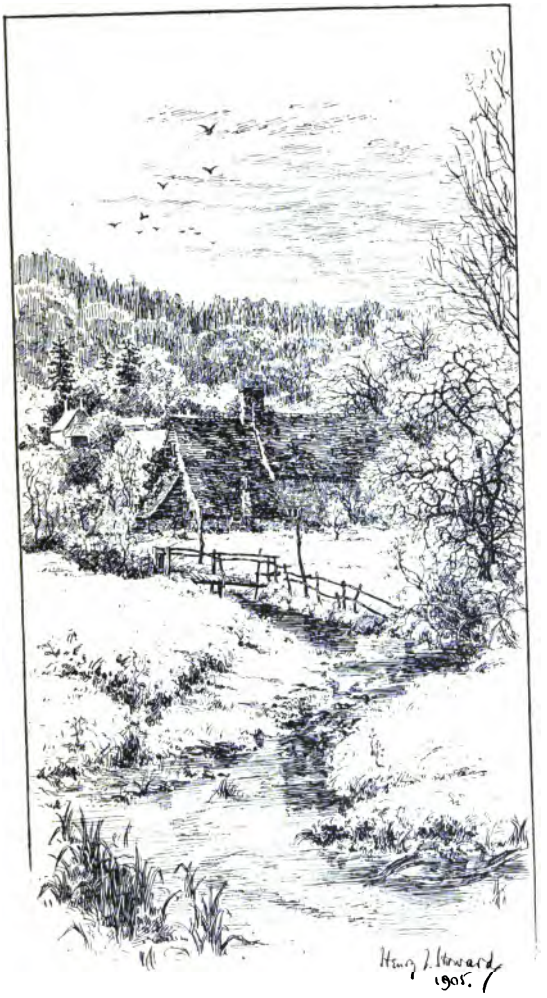
From the sycamore in the Plestor it is but a few yards to the famous yew in the churchyard. Standing close to the south porch, it still flourishes wonderfully, shedding its pollen in due season; when last I sat beneath it a colony of starlings had appropriated it as a nursery. White, in the "Antiquities" (Letter V.), records that in his day this tree had a girth of 23 feet; recently, as Mr. Dewar was told, the girth, taken at 4 feet from the ground, was 25 feet. Only by walking slowly round it, and carefully noting the extent of its adumbrage, can we realise the gigantic dimensions of this old yew. The "largest yew-tree in England," like the smallest church, is a subject provocative of controversy; another huge specimen stands at Faringdon hard by, but its condition is ruinous; the trunk of that at St. Mary Bourne is in part decayed. The yew in the churchyard at Darley in Derbyshire has a maximum girth of 33 feet!

A beautifully diversified country lies below the churchyard. Here the Bourne wanders—a narrow, twisting stream that gives to Selborne the latter half of its name. The whole neighbourhood—I may call it the valley of the Bourne—is full of charm. As you go down the pathway that leads at length to the Priory Farm, the Short Lythe is upon your left; on your right rises Dorton

Hill; beyond are Dorton Woods and the Long Lythe, to which we will return presently. Mr. Hudson, whom Grant Allen likened to White himself as a watcher of the wild life of moor and woodland, never wearied of the banks of the Bourne during his visit in July 1901. I can sympathise with his joy, for the spot might inspire an-

PRIORY FARM

other "Ballade of the Bourne," far different from the one we owe to Graham R. Tomson. Mr. Hudson found the bed of the stream largely grown over with water-plants, as the writer found it last summer. He noticed the tall figwort, the water-agrimony with its masses of powdery bloom, the meadow-sweet, the rose-purple loosestrife and willow herb. He saw, too, the wild musk or monkey flower, so abundant around Selborne; he found it even at the waters' edge, mingled with briar roses and with "large turquoise blue water forget-me-nots." I have wandered by that water-course when the year



BESIDE THE BOURNE

was younger—when the meadows were so densely covered with buttercups that their yellow petals almost obliterated the greenery of the May grass; when the dandelion had already blossomed, and I found myself wondering, like Jefferies, how many millions of their caraway-like seeds were close at hand. It was almost too early for butterflies, but orange-tips flitted hither and thither in the May sunshine. I plucked the sweet woodruff on a day corresponding with that noted in White's "Naturalist's Calendar" (May 22–25). Later, in July, the musk-mallow is conspicuous; Mr. Hudson's reference to it is so accurate that I must quote his words. "So rarely seen elsewhere, it was quite common round the village; and perhaps the finest plant I saw was in the churchyard, growing luxuriantly by a humble grave. . . . As it is known to few persons, there must almost every day have been strangers and pilgrims in the churchyard who looked with admiration on that conspicuous plant with its deep-cut scented geranium-like beautiful leaves, tender grey-green in colour, and its profusion of delicate silky rose-coloured flowers."

Perhaps, however, the western side of the village is more attractive to most visitors. For here, nearly opposite to the Plestor, stands The Wakes, so long the home of Gilbert White, to which further reference will presently be made. The part farthest from the Plestor, "built of white stone with

brick dressings," is a portion of the original house. The garden, and the meadows that stretch thence to the foot of the Hanger, are of special interest, for many of White's observations were made within their area. To climb the Hanger by the orthodox way of ascent we pass down the village street—past the Post Office and the Selborne Arms, past the Queen's Arms, where Huxley wrote his name in the visitors' book. The village, even now-a-days, contains but few shops; nor is there any resident doctor or chemist in its immediate neighbourhood. Indeed, the village itself, apart from its associations, can show but little of interest. At the south end, near Gally Lane, stands the Victoria Jubilee Fountain; at the north-west end, in Gracious Street, there is a curious tablet on a cottage. In the centre of the tablet is a heart in outline; on the left of the heart are the initials A. S.; on the right, R. T. A.; beneath is the date 1697. So far as I am aware, the origin of this tablet is unknown, and local authorities differ in their reading of its signification.

Close to the Post Office, a footpath leads to the famous zigzag, a diagonal ascent up the face of the Hanger, which brings us at length to the summit, close to the sheep-down. When Mr. George Stanton visited Selborne in the autumn of 1896, this ascent was being repaired. "Originally," he writes,[1] "it was probably cut out of the

[1] *Nature Notes:* October 1898.

natural soil, not bad in dry weather, but when damp or wet the surface of marly chalk was very slippery and treacherous, and I am sure many have shown the nature of the soil on their hands and knees on leaving it. . . . To those who do not know the construction of this extraordinary way of getting up a steep hill with the least amount of exertion, I may say it is a series of gradually ascending short diagonal paths, each five to six yards long, first to the left, then to the right. This is repeated until an elevation of 300 feet is reached with ease and comfort." At the summit stands the Wishing Stone; from here, and from other spots as we go towards Wood Lane (which leads to the north end of the village, near the Alton road), we get picturesque glimpses of Selborne, so far below, and of the undulating landscape beyond. The vicinity of the Hanger is full of rich rewards for the botanist. A large proportion of the entire local flora can be gathered here. One morning, late in the month of May, I noticed fading primroses, and cowslips in their prime, stinking hellebore and sweet woodruff, dog violets and myosotis, stitchworts and celandines, and several other flowers within the radius of a few paces. The Rev. John Vaughan, writing on the flora of the Hanger, mentions, among other plants, the spurge laurel, the lesser periwinkle, the yellow monatropa, the autumnal gentian, and the bird's-nest orchis.

CHAPTER III

ANTIQUITIES

THE Antiquities of Selborne, as is well known, were admirably digested by Gilbert White in a series of twenty-six letters, to which he appended transcripts from five Latin documents regarding the history and possessions of the Priory. In the Advertisement prefixed to the first edition of the "Natural History of Selborne in the County of Southampton" (1789), he thanked the President and Fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford, for permitting him to search their archives, "so far as the evidences therein contained might respect the parish and priory of Selborne." He certainly searched and sifted to good purpose, and the gist of what is known on the subject is stated, with other matters touching the church and its story, in those interesting letters.

We may doubt, however, whether the "Antiquities" will ever find one quarter as many readers as the "Natural History," and for this reason I will endeavour to summarise some of White's letters in the compass of a few paragraphs, adding, where-

ever possible, such details as I have gleaned elsewhere.

White begins his narrative by referring to the many Roman coins found—frequently in his own day—in the neighbourhood of Selborne. He refers particularly to the years 1740 and 1741, which were so dry that "many springs and ponds failed"; search was made in their exposed beds, and great numbers of copper coins were found, many of which dated from Marcus Aurelius. White, however, was by no means a Monkbarns, and was far too shrewd to suppose that such discoveries necessarily proved that the spot was once a Roman town—a mistake very commonly made—nor is any such known to have existed in the immediate neighbourhood. But there are traces of a people infinitely older than the Romans. Dr. J. C. Cox has recently reminded us that at Blackmoor, in Selborne parish, many weapons of the Bronze Age—weapons of the Goidels, or early Aryan migrators—were found during the eighteenth century. Naturally, such fragmentary evidences tell but little of the early history of Selborne; but the fragments become more coherent as we approach Saxon times, and White was able to claim, in his second letter, that at that period the place was "of some distinction and note." From Domesday we learn that Selborne was a royal manor; and that a church was upon it:—"De isto manerio dono dedit rex Radfredo presbytero dimidiam

hidam cum ecclesia." That the village itself dated from Saxon times White was persuaded by its name, by that of many local families and fields, and by many words of daily service, some examples of which he quotes. He mentions that the Saxon plurals *housen* and *peason* were in common use, and adds that other words would be noticed by those who frequent farmers' kitchens. From other writers I gather that in the neighbourhood of Selborne, as elsewhere in Hampshire, there are few if any authentic burial remains dating from Saxon times.

An appendix to White's "Antiquities," written by Lord Selborne, gives an interesting account of some recent discoveries in the neighbourhood. He relates that about 1774, in Wolmer Pond, a pot of coins was found, which contained a complete series of the Roman emperors, from Claudius I. to Commodus, inclusive. At Blackmoor, whilst digging the foundations for a wall in 1867, a "large sepulchral earthenware vase" was unearthed, enclosing a nearly perfect bronze cup, a large coin (thought to be of Lucius Verus), a thin bronze patera, and some fragments of bones. More important was the discovery, in 1873, of what was said to be "the largest deposit of Roman or Roman-British coins ever yet found at one time in Great Britain." They were found in two earthenware vases, and numbered nearly 30,000. Some workmen, trenching ground between Blackmoor House and Wolmer

Pond, unearthed the vases some two feet below the surface; but the upper parts of both were broken. Lord Selborne further mentions the many circular tumuli in the neighbourhood—there are, for instance, six on one side of Wolmer Road and five on the other—but very little has been ascertained when some of them have been opened. Up to the present time, so far as I am aware, no weapons or coins have been found in them. As is usual in such cases, theories as to their extreme antiquity have been put forward; but such are merely conjectural. That important events transpired in the neighbourhood during the Roman occupation is probable enough, and Lord Selborne, who evidently studied the subject carefully, expresses the opinion that the Wolmer Basin provided the battle-field where Allectus was routed by Asclepiodotus, an engagement which lives for us in the pages of Eumenius, in that panegyric which he pronounced to the honour of Constantius Cæsar.

Of Wolmer Forest there are anecdotes, repeated by White, which hardly concern us here; his remarks on the village church will be noticed in a separate chapter. But his brief notices of its vicars are very interesting, and belong to our immediate subject. The living was "very small" but, being in the patronage of Magdalen College, it was endowed, in the seventeenth century, with the "great tithes of Selborne," and in the next century with those of Oakhanger.

Radfredo the priest has been already mentioned; of several of his successors we know little beyond their names, and even their names are sometimes lacking. From the year 1594 the register is complete; but the first vicar whom White refers to at length is John Longworth, instituted in July 1632. White's reference to him is so interesting that I must quote his own words.

"This unfortunate gentleman, living in the time of Cromwell's usurpation, was deprived of his preferment for many years, probably because he would not take the league and covenant: for I observe that his father-in-law, the Reverend Jethro Beal, rector of Faringdon, which is the next parish, enjoyed his benefice during the whole of that unhappy period. Longworth, after he was dispossessed, retired to a little tenement about one hundred and fifty yards from the church, where he earned a small pittance by the practice of physic. During those dismal times it was not uncommon for the deposed clergy to take up a medical character; as was the case in particular, I know, with the Rev. Mr. Yalden, rector of Compton, near Guildford, in the county of Surrey. Vicar Longworth used frequently to mention to his sons, who told it to my relations, that, the Sunday after his deprivation, his puritanical successor stepped into the pulpit with no small petulance and exultation; and began his sermon from Psalm xx. 8: "They are brought down and

fallen; but we are risen and stand upright." This person lived to be restored in 1660, and continued vicar for eighteen years; but was so impoverished by his misfortunes, that he left the vicarage-house and premises in a very abject and dilapidated state."

Such a paragraph is not merely the materials of history; it is history itself, in the best sense of the term, for it brings the past more realistically before us than a more formal narrative. John Longworth's successor was a Richard Byfield, who bequeathed money to apprentice poor lads, but the bequest, although ultimately increased by prudent investment, was for some time misapplied. To Byfield succeeded Barnabas Long, who in turn was followed by Gilbert White, M.A., a Junior Fellow of Magdalen College, and grandfather of Gilbert White the Naturalist; he was instituted to the living in 1681. He did much to improve and repair both church and vicarage, and left "the sum of forty pounds to be laid out in the most necessary repairs of the church." Part of this money provided two large buttresses for the strengthening of the south wall at its eastern end; they were long ago removed, but are clearly shewn in the well-known view of the church from the south in 1776. His will also provided £100 for the purchase of land, the rental of which was to pay for the teaching of poor children in the parish. They were to be taught to read and write, to repeat

prayers and the catechism, to sew and to knit. Moreover, he bequeathed £200 for the repair of the highways, which enabled his son, John White, to make a "solid and firm causey" from Rood Green to Oakwoods Farm—a most beneficial work, as the road ultimately led through the forest to Farnham, then the only market within reach of the wheat farmers of Selborne. Subsequent vicars are named by White, who merely mentions their repairs of church or vicarage, and their charitable bequests.

From the vicars of Selborne, White turns to give some account of the Priory, whose story he deems "the most interesting part of our history." During the reign of John, a Poictevin named Peter de la Roche, or de Rupibus, was favourably received at the English Court; but his character does not stand very high with historians. He rose, however, in the esteem of John; in 1205 he became Bishop of Winchester, and soon afterwards "first magistrate in the state." After the king's death, he became governor of England during the minority of Henry III. Having quarrelled with the barons, he retired for some time to Palestine, but returned to England in 1231. In the following year he "began to build and endow the Priory of Selborne," which he dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The spot chosen for this purpose was in his own diocese; "the situation was retired, with a stream running by it, and sequestered from

the world, amidst woods and meadows, and so far proper for the site of a religious house." The site of the Priory itself was purchased from Jacobus de Achangre or Ochangre—the Oakhanger of to-day—from whom Roche obtained a small croft known as La Liega or La lyge. The foundation was for Augustinian canons.

In addition to La Liega, the bishop obtained from Ochangre three neighbouring crofts, and from one Jacobus de Nortun he acquired other grounds, notably those through which the Bourne runs close by the church, since known as the Long Lythe. The documents proving these grants of property are still preserved; in one of them we read—as White's translation runs:—"The bishop gave me sixteen marks as a consideration for the thing purchased"; in another occurs a sentence truly characteristic of the times:—"The bishop advanced me thirty-five marks of silver to pay my debts to the Jews." But the bishop wished to still further increase the properties of his foundation, so he applied to Henry III., and a grant made on March 9th, 1234, and given at Northampton by the then chancellor, Richard, bishop of Chichester, gave to the priory of Selborne some manorial land formerly owned by Stephen de Lucy. So the priory grew, and waxed rich, as priories were wont to do. On the whole, those Augustinian brothers must surely have passed a very pleasant existence, for their

retreat was beautiful for situation, sheltered from civil disturbances; and probably the priory tables not infrequently groaned beneath the good cheer laid upon them. That there were many subsequent grants of lands or tenements to Selborne priory we know from White's own pages, apart from original documents. Some such were gifts, —bestowed at the dictates of charitable hearts; but others were as certainly the outcome of policy rather than piety. For priories were often powerful institutions, with great local influence, and persons of all kinds were very glad to be regarded as the patrons of the prior. Moreover, as White slyly remarks, "the religious were not backward in keeping up this pious propensity, which they observed so readily influenced the breasts of men."

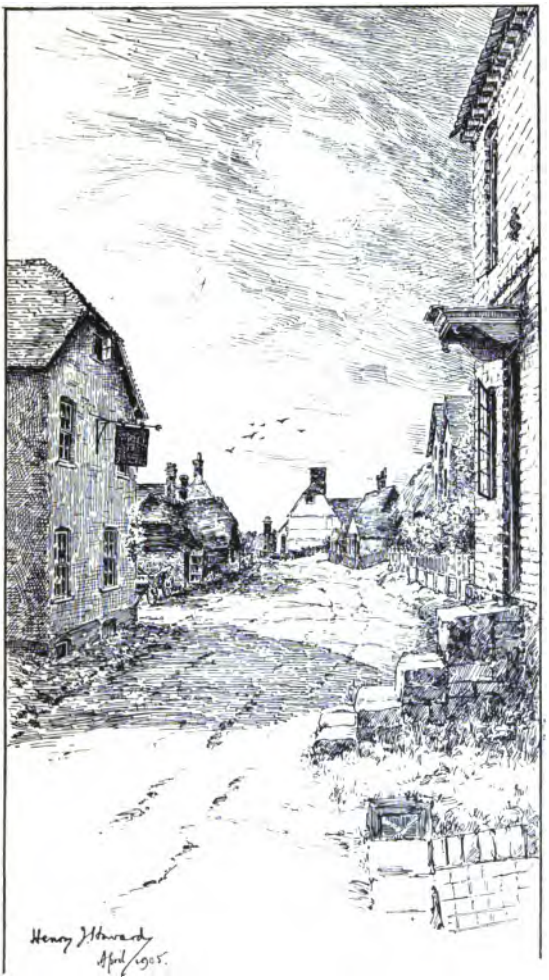
A name that figures prominently in the story of Selborne and its priory is that of Sir Adam Gurdon. Before his knighthood he was a bailiff of Alton. He became a leader in the Mountfort faction; but after the battle of Evesham, where Mountfort was slain, he hid himself and followers in the woods. Here he was attacked by Prince Edward, and taken prisoner; but the Prince pardoned him and, as the story runs, presented him the same evening to the Queen, then at Guildford. Gurdon, as White surmises, lived presently at Temple, a manor-house some two miles eastward from Selborne church. The house was sketched

by Grimm, and an engraving executed for the quarto editions of the "Antiquities"; this was recently redrawn by Mr. Edmund H. New, and figures in the edition of the Natural History by Grant Allen. A note by Prof. Bell records that the home of Gurdon was pulled down long ago; but it stood in White's day, having been occupied as a farmhouse "from time immemorial." It contained, among other chambers, an oratory about sixteen feet square and nearly eighteen feet high, with walls of great thickness and narrow windows. The ceiling was of huge joists, "placed only five or six inches apart." This oratory was at the north end of the house, and the adjoining land was called Chapel-field, as it is, I believe, to-day. The right to erect this oratory was obtained by Gurdon from the prior of Selborne in the year 1262, with stipulations forbidding either him or his lady to "infringe the rights of the mother church at Selborne."

To Gurdon, as I have already mentioned, the priory was indebted for the Plestor. The prior, soon after the gift of this convenient site, petitioned King Henry III. to grant him a charter for a market. Houses and stalls were erected, and Selborne was henceforth a market-town; but for how long White was unable to ascertain. Gurdon reserved the right of way to "a tenement and some crofts" at the south-east corner of the Plestor, a site now

approximately occupied by the cottage nearest the churchyard; that which stood there in White's day was called "Elliot's." Moreover, Gurdon granted to the prior and canons possession of tenements and gardens in Selborne, granted them right of common, and allowed them to build and plant for themselves on the village highway. These, and other privileges granted by Gurdon to the priory of Selborne, were granted for his soul's sake, and for the sake of the soul of his wife Constantia.

White gives an interesting explanation of the "strange jumble of property" conspicuous in the Selborne of his own day. The entire manor evidently belonged to Gurdon; but he gave so much to the priory that when, at the Dissolution, those properties passed to Magdalen College, their owners gradually multiplied, until one field or tenement "belonged to Magdalen College in the university of Oxford, and the next to Norton Powlet, Esq., of Rotherfield House; and so down the whole street." Of Gurdon himself we catch other glimpses ere he passes out of White's narrative. By Edward I. he was made Keeper of Wolmer Forest, a post for which he was well qualified, as from his house at Temple he overlooked the larger part of the forest. He is known to have at times acted rebelliously. At Hawksley near by, then called Hocheleye, he seized a mill and some land belonging to the bishop of Winchester, and a *distringas*



SELBORNE STREET

was issued against him for their restoration. Moreover, he refused to the bishop and others their immemorial rights of pasture in the forest, and was compelled by the King to make restitution in this matter also. Lastly, we read that when, almost at the close of the thirteenth century, the French burnt Dover, Gurdon was ordered by Edward to become one of five persons to enlist 3000 men and march them to Winchelsea for the King's transports. As White thought, Gurdon died in his home at Temple at an advanced age.

The story of Selborne is also associated with that of the Knights Templars. They owned lands in Selborne, and had a preceptory at Sudington, afterwards called Southington, a little eastwards from the village, and another between Selborne and Temple, the site of which was forgotten even in White's day. A few transactions between preceptory and priory, touching rights and properties, are mentioned by White. He found no traces of any intercourse between the Knights Templars and Sir Adam Gurdon; but he conjectured, reasonably enough, that the home at Temple owed its name to the warrior knights.

Another noticeable name is that of a lady, Ela Longspee, who, in 1281, engaged with the prior that a mass should daily be said for her soul's welfare, living or dead. In return for the promise of one hundred marks of silver, to be paid to the priory within five

years, she obtained the use of a chantry-chapel and the services of a chaplain, so that mass might be also said for her daily in the parish church. The site of the chantry was probably, as White thought, identical with that subsequently known as the south chancel, which was "fenced off with gothic wooden railing" prior to the middle of the eighteenth century. Ela Longspee, who bestowed many gifts upon religious houses in Oxfordshire, died in the year 1300. According to Edmonson's work on the Grevilles, she was "buried before the high altar in the abbey church of Oseney, at the head of the tomb of Henry D'Oily, under a flat marble, on which was laid her portraiture, in the habit of a vowess, engraved on a copper-plate."

Many details concerning the discipline, or lack of it, in the Priory of Selborne, are given by White; but they are mostly such as we encounter in the history of other priories, and may here be passed over. Like other institutions, its members, only too frequently, abused the privileges of their order, and thus placed a weapon in the hands of their enemies, who used it mercilessly in the day of their opportunity. After many preliminaries, the priory was finally suppressed by a Bull of Pope Innocent VIII., dated June 8, 1486. White remarks that this was seventy-four years after the suppression of priories alien by Henry V. and about fifty years before the general dissolution under Henry VIII.

CHAPTER IV

GILBERT WHITE

IN 1681, a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, named Gilbert White, was presented by his college to the vicarage of Selborne. He was grandfather and godfather to his greater namesake, the Gilbert White whose story I have to briefly trace in this chapter. The connection of Gilbert White the elder, and of his son John, with the parish of Selborne, has already been alluded to, and I purpose now to confine my remarks almost exclusively to the celebrated author of the "Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne."

Gilbert White was the eldest of a family of seven sons and four daughters. The next three children died in infancy; of the remaining seven a few words may be said in passing. Thomas Holt, born in 1724, was for some years in business, and was as deeply interested in natural history as his brother Gilbert; he became a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1777, and a frequent contributor to the *Gentleman's Magazine.* Benjamin, born in 1725, became well known as the publisher of many books on scientific

subjects, eventually, as we shall see, issuing that work from his brother's pen which is read wherever the English language is understood. John, also a naturalist, who corresponded with Linnaeus, took holy orders and was for some time chaplain at Gibraltar; he had a son, "Jack," who lived awhile with his uncle Gilbert, and to whom I must refer again presently. Anne, born in 1731, married Thomas Barker of Lyndon Hall; the family corresponded frequently with Gilbert, and many of his letters to them have been published. Henry, born in 1733, was sometime rector of Fyfield. Of Gilbert's sisters Rebecca and Francis we know very little.[1]

Gilbert White the younger was born at Selborne, on the 18th of July, 1720, in the vicarage which his grandfather, as already mentioned, had done much to repair. His mother was a daughter of the Rev. Thomas Holt, sometime rector of Streatham. Of Gilbert's boyhood,—even after the recent publication of "The Life of Gilbert White of Selborne," from the pen of Mr. Rashleigh Holt-White,—we know very little. He was sent to school at Basingstoke, where he was educated under Thomas Warton, then vicar of that town, and father of two sons afterwards distinguished—Joseph, who became master of Winchester School, and Thomas, the historian of English poetry and

[1] For these details of White's family I am in part indebted to Prof. Bell's "Memoir."

the friend of Johnson and Reynolds, of Garrick and Burke. In December 1739 White entered Oriel College, Oxford; he became Bachelor of Arts in June 1743 and Master of Arts in 1746; having meantime (1744) been elected a Fellow. In 1747 he was ordained a deacon by Thomas Secker, Bishop of Oxford—who afterwards became Archbishop of Canterbury, and who incurred Johnson's dislike by altering the good old toast of "Church and King." During the whole of White's college days he kept his eyes open, observing Nature widely and well; for he frequently, in after life, alluded to phenomena noticed by him in the neighbourhood of Oxford. Indeed, although we have no reason to doubt that he deemed himself a strong churchman, we cannot think that theology or ecclesiasticism ever absorbed his attention so closely as natural history; we may doubt, for instance, whether his love for the Church was comparable to the love cherished for her by Izaak Walton. But as a cleric he was destined to pass much of his time. An uncle, too, was in holy orders, and after his ordination White became curate of Swarraton, near Old Alresford, where this uncle held the perpetual curacy, after the manner of the times. Professor Bell, who had in his possession an account-book belonging to White, tells us that an entry records his receipt, in 1748, of twenty pounds, as curate's stipend for one year. Even the

parson of Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," who so closely synchronises with White, received twice this stipend, for he was "passing rich on forty pounds a year." Eventually, one Sunday in March 1749, White was ordained a priest by Beauclerk, Bishop of Hereford, in the chapel in Spring Gardens.

It was on October 25, 1751, that White was appointed to the curacy of Selborne, a position which he soon relinquished, for in the following year he became Junior Proctor of Oriel, and he himself recorded that in consequence of his proctorship he "threw up" the curacy of Selborne. A story told to Bell, concerning White's proctorship, is so good that I must repeat it here. One evening, as White was going his rounds, he saw an undergraduate asleep on the ground, and apparently drunk, in the triangle behind the Schools and Theatre. He was in part undressed, but his outer garments were "neatly folded up and placed by his side." White awoke him, and the culprit promptly sobered at sight of the proctor. He was ordered to attend the proctor next morning, when White, as Bell relates, thus addressed him: "I was shocked and distressed, young man, to see you in such a disgraceful situation as you were in last evening—a situation of which I hope you were thoroughly ashamed. You deserve an exemplary punishment; but I observed one circumstance which shows

that you are not wholly degraded. Your clothes were folded up by your side, indicating habits of care and neatness which appear incompatible with habitual degradation. I shall therefore say no more upon this occasion, beyond the expression of my sincere hope that I shall never again hear of your being guilty of such disgraceful conduct." The whole story is very characteristic of the age—an age when Oxford, in the opinion of Gibbon, was sunk in prejudice and port.

We cannot form any true mental picture of the person of White, as we can of Johnson or Garrick or Boswell or Percy, or of others among his contemporaries who live on the canvas of Reynolds. For, as is well known, no portrait of White exists; but he was described in words, and from such descriptions Mr. E. J. Sullivan composed and drew the clever picture entitled "A Letter to Pennant," published in Messrs. Constable's edition of the "Natural History" and recently reproduced in *The Bookman*. The Rev. Francis White, a nephew of Gilbert, told Bell that White was "only five feet three inches in stature, of a spare form and remarkably upright carriage." As such, apparently, Mr. Sullivan has represented him, sitting at a table with several volumes before him and a large quill in his hand, writing one of his immortal letters to Pennant.

White was destined to fill a third curacy

before he finally settled at Selborne. In the autumn of 1753 he became curate of Durley, and was thus, for a year and a half, closely associated with a neighbourhood familiar, many years before, to Izaak Walton. For from Durley it is but a stroll to Droxford, where Walton stayed much in the evening of his days, worshipping, we may be sure, in the parish church, of which was curate his friend John Darbyshire.[1] White, before entering upon his duties at Durley, had quitted residence at Oxford; during his discharge of those duties he lived at Bishop's Waltham, whence he could easily ride over to Selborne. But in the spring of 1755, White finally settled at Selborne, and then commenced those tireless and shrewd observations of the natural features of his surroundings which have made his name indelibly associated with his native village. In 1763 he inherited "The Wakes" from his uncle Charles, who died in that year, and who had been rector of Bradley. Noting, here and now, the chief landmarks in White's subsequent life, we find that he presently became curate of Faringdon, some two miles distant from Selborne; that he retained that curacy for more than twenty years; and that finally, in 1784, he once again became curate of Selborne. From the time when he estab-

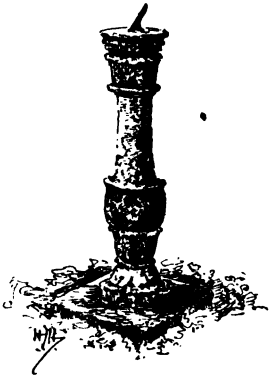
[1] Walton's connection with Droxford was first described by Canon Vaughan. (*Longman's Magazine*, Nov. 1904.)

lished himself at The Wakes, his interest in his village and its neighbourhood grew with his years, and he declined several

THE WAKES

livings which were in the gift of his college. So wholly was he engrossed by the incidents of his daily life, always of interest to him, however trivial, that he does not appear to have ever contemplated matrimony. A story, often repeated, has associated his name with that of Hester Mulso, afterwards Mrs. Chapone, who died in 1801, and whose "Letters on the Improvement of the Mind" we have all turned over on the book-

stalls. It was long asserted that White courted this lady, who was destined to wed another and far different man, to whom she was introduced by Richardson; but Mr. Holt-White assures us that this is purely legendary, and, on such a subject, the word



WHITE'S SUNDIAL

of Mr. Holt-White is likely to be final. In fact, as his biographer puts it, White "had but one mistress—Selborne."

Mr. Edmund H. New, in an illustration to Grant Allen's edition of the "Natural History," has shown us White's sitting-room, where the naturalist passed so many of his pleasant hours at The Wakes. The house itself has been much altered since his day, but, as stated (Chap. II.), a part still retains in the main its original configuration. As White knew it, it was ample for his modest

requirements, although, as his letters prove, he was never more happy than when visited by his friends, or when visiting them in return. He retained the Fellowship of Oriel, and journeyed to Oxford every year; he visited relatives in London, in Rutlandshire, in Sussex; he rode extensively in Hampshire and elsewhere in the neighbourhood of the county. Stage-coaches he did not like, for they made him ill; so he usually travelled on horseback. This custom earned him the title of "hussar-parson," bestowed on him by his friend John Mulso, brother of Hester afore-mentioned, and rector of Meonstoke, near Droxford.

By far the larger number of White's letters, in the collections that have been published, were written during the latter half of his life. Those included in Bell's handsome edition are, by the kindness of Mr. New, before me as I write. They contain almost all that we knew about him prior to the publication of Mr. Holt-White's "Life," and read side by side with the two series, addressed respectively to Pennant and Daines Barrington, and comprising together the "Natural History of Selborne," they tell us the story of his days. To those two series I shall revert in my next chapter, and will here try to give some pictures from White's customary life, which shall enable readers to appreciate his wide interests and kindly activities. He seems

to have passed his whole life without meeting with any very serious or very comic adventure. That he was widely respected seems indisputable, and I have myself been amused to find how eagerly the remotest connection with him is claimed by persons in the neighbourhood of Selborne. Once, whilst watching a woodpecker in Wolmer Forest, I was startled by a man who had approached unnoticed. He was engaged on one of the bungalows in that delightful district, and I learned that he was a native of Hampshire, that his family had lived in the neighbourhood for very many years, and that his father was baptized by White in the church at Faringdon, where the event was registered in his own handwriting, and may still be seen. But memories grow fainter year by year, and a time comes when we can know nothing of a man's characteristics except by documentary evidence. That evidence, in the case of White, shows us an English gentleman, sufficiently pious to spend much of his time in the exercise of Christian duties; scholarly enough to enjoy his classics, and humane enough to show practical sympathy with sorrow and affliction wherever he found them. All readers of White's letters must have noticed how frequently he alludes to the sick and suffering folk in his parish, and this trait in his character is the more to his credit because his strong scientific predilections might well have led him to

neglect all else. Though of good constitution, he had his own physical infirmities; his deafness, which increased with his years, sorely tried him in conversation. In earlier days he had a severe attack of small-pox, with which he lay ill many weeks at Oxford.

The Rev. John White received many charming letters from his brother's pen. As we turn the pages of that correspondence we find it as full of trivial but characteristic records as the "Natural History" itself. On one occasion Gilbert tells John that "the insect with a long slender petiolus between the thorax and abdomen is a fine sort of ichneumon"; on another, he asks whether there are not in Spain some "crown-flocks of sheep which migrate with the seasons from N. to S.," and asks for anecdotes concerning them. He relates how, in 1773, some boys caught flappers (*i.e.* young wild ducks) on Oakhanger ponds, and among them some young teal; "till now," he adds, "I never knew that teals bred in England." He draws John's attention to a passage in Hesiod regarding the chirp of the cicada; and to such circumstances as the appearance of a flock of spoonbills at Yarmouth, which birds, he adds, must have crossed the German Ocean, "no narrow frith." White does not mark the last three words as a quotation, but, as readers will remember, they are borrowed from "Paradise Lost," which we know he had read.

Nor were literary matters overlooked when these brothers exchanged letters. Reference is made to Johnson's "Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland," to Chesterfield's "Letters," to Hume's "England." A passage from the "Odyssey" (iv. 566) is cited as a suitable motto for John's book on Spain; the "Medea" of Seneca is quoted touching the discovery of America. Of Jack and his reading we get interesting glimpses, and Virgil, Sallust and Horace seem to have been diligently conned by uncle and nephew. The naughtiness of classical poets was a subject of regret. "We began to read Horace's odes together; but found many of them so indecent for a young man, that we have taken to the epistles, which are a fine body of ethics, and very entertaining and sensible." To books by naturalists at home and abroad there are many references, particularly to Ray, and to Ray's collaborator Willoughby. An older world moves very pleasantly before us in the pages of that correspondence.

Several letters to Samuel Barker, only son to White's sister Anne, show the writer more deeply interested in the niceties of literature than we might have supposed from the general tenor of his correspondence. In one, written in 1774, he touches that subject of perennial interest—the prose of poets. "Our best poets have been our best prose writers; of this assertion Dryden and Pope are notorious instances." In the

same letter he writes of alliteration, which, he says, "has a fine effect when managed with discretion," and he cites the same poets as masters of the art in question. He seems to have thought highly of Pope's "Iliad," not only as a poem but as a rendering of the original. Dryden he considered "much the greatest master of numbers of any of our English bards," and, singularly enough, he calls Milton the "father of blank verse," and writes of his diction in language almost identical with that of Johnson, whose life of the poet appeared four years later. In short, White's literary tastes were in the main the tastes of his age; and looking round for poems on which to write some commendatory comments, he thinks of Somerville's "Chace" and Philips' "Cyder"; but it is only just to remember that he professed merely to record his "crude sentiments in a hasty way on the subject of English poetry." Perhaps, at this distance of time, the most interesting of all White's literary allusions was set down in a letter to Thomas Barker, his son-in-law, dated from London, February 7, 1776: "Mr. Gibbon, a Hants gentleman, publishes next week his first volume in quarto of a History of the latter Roman Empire; there will be four volumes in all." Gibbon, as Bell points out, appears to have been intimate with White. I have often regretted that White did not keep a journal devoted to the literary doings of his age, for, to some of us at least, it would almost have

rivalled in interest the "Natural History" itself. From several allusions from his pen it would seem that then, as now, author and publisher had to study the taste of the public. To his brother John, then about to publish his book on the Natural History of Spain, White says, "Your bookseller, *at last*, will be your *best* adviser respecting a title-page; for such men best understand the pulse of the publick."

Here and there, in the letters of White, we catch glimpses of persons and things interesting to students of our national history. To Samuel Barker he wrote, on July 1, 1776, "As I was visiting last Tuesday at Bramshot, I saw on the Portsmouth road Burgoyne's light horse marching down to embark for N. America. The horses were fine, and the men fine young fellows; but they all look'd very grave, and did not seem much to admire their destination. The Atlantic is no small frith for cavalry to be transported over: the expence will be enormous!" To his sister Mary, on January 22, 1783, he writes, "We have had all this winter 26 Highlanders of the 77th regiment quartered in this village and at Oakhanger: where, tho' they had nothing in the world to do, they have behaved in a very quiet and inoffensive manner, and were never known to steal even a turnip or a cabbage, tho' they lived much on vegetables, and were astonished at the dearness of southern provisions. Late last night came

an express ordering these poor fellows down to Portsmouth; where they are to embark for India, near 100 of them aboard Ch. Etty's ship." To Marsham, on January 2, 1793, he wrote, "You have not told me anything about Arthur Young. You cannot abhor the dangerous doctrines of levellers and republicans more than I do! I was born and bred a Gentleman, and hope I shall be allowed to die such. The reason you having (?) so many bad neighbours is your nearness to a great factious, manufacturing town. Our common people are more simple-minded, and know nothing of Jacobin clubs."

Sometimes White takes us behind the scenes, and tells us of the alterations or additions to his home, or of the health and movements of Timothy, the Sussex tortoise. The tortoise was very important in the eyes of White, whose allusions to it remind us, as Lowell suggested, of the Court Calendar. Its story is recorded partly in the "Natural History" and partly in the miscellaneous correspondence of its owner. How far White, in his letter entitled "Timothy the Tortoise to Miss Hecky Mulso," drew upon his imagination, it is impossible to say. The letter, as Bell pointed out, was evidently a reply to verses addressed to "Timothy" by Miss Mulso, though the verses are lost. According to White's amusing *jeu d'esprit*, Timothy was born on a savanna in Virginia, in 1734, and was of

so long-lived a tribe that his great-great-grandfather, whose death he remembered, attained an age of 160 years. One day, as Timothy was sunning himself under a bush, he was noticed by a sea-boy, who carried him on board ship. The ship sailed, Timothy slumbered in the hold, and when the voyage ended in Chichester harbour he was sold for half-a-crown to a country gentleman. Packed in a hand-basket, he was carried on horseback for forty miles, to his future home. Here his purchaser, "a great humourist," gave him that name by which he was afterwards known, but neglected him so continually that he was cared for by a lady. With her he lived for nearly forty years, and, when she died, he became the property of her cousin—Gilbert White. The acquisition of the tortoise was so important an event that White penned a letter on the subject to Daines Barrington. He described its removal and subsequent behaviour with loving precision—how he had dug it from its winter snuggery, how he had carried it eighty miles in a post-chaise (from Ringmer to Selborne), how the jolting of the journey so thoroughly aroused it that, on being released, "it walked twice down to the bottom of the garden," and how, in the cool of the evening, it crawled into some loose mould. He delights in the idea that now he can watch its mode of life, and records the further important facts that on a warm afternoon, April 21, 1781, Timothy

"heaved up the mould and put out its head," and, coming forth next morning, walked about till four in the afternoon! The shell of Timothy may still be seen, for it was presented by White's niece to the British Museum, and is now in the Natural History Museum at South Kensington. Like Cowper's hares or Newton's dog "Diamond," it owes its immortality to the vagaries of its master.

Reverting to White's home-life at The Wakes, he prattled of it so frequently on paper that we share his joys and disappointments as we read his letters. On one occasion he writes to brother John that his "wall has produced about ten dozen of most lovely peaches and nectarines; and I have a fine show of grapes." Soon afterwards he tells John that he is altering his lawn and walk at the garden door, "so as to destroy the two steps, and to level the ground quite on to the alcove," for he had found the steps slippery and regarded them as a nuisance. Then he tells him how he talks of building a parlour, but cannot bring himself to start, and fears he could not inhabit it till the second year because of its "green walls." Some weeks later the matter is still *sub judice;* but he confesses that "next week will be the last week of asking, because the bark of oaks (as I must cut some timber) will not strip or run after that time." Time passed quickly, however, and in the following year he tells his sister,

Mrs. Barker, that he talks of some addition to his house *next summer*, but suspects his "resolution in setting about it." The resolution was not taken and acted upon till 1777, when he added a large room to The Wakes. How assiduously he cultivated his garden we know from many letters, and his relatives must have known its contents almost as well as its owner. Whilst still planning his new room he wrote to Barker that cucumbers were not succeeding well that year, but that he had "much wall-fruit and a fine show for grapes; pears, plums, apples and cherries without number." We cannot doubt that he was a happy country parson, and would have contrived to be so in any other age. He could probably have exclaimed, with his contemporary Goldsmith:[1]—

> "How small of all that human hearts endure,
> That part which kings or laws can cause or cure.
> Still to ourselves in every place consign'd,
> Our own felicity we make or find;
> With secret course, which no loud storms annoy,
> Glides the smooth current of domestic joy."

Sometimes, however, the even tenor of this ideal Hampshire life was disturbed by events so strange in the eyes of White that he hastened to record them while fresh in his memory. One such occasion inspired an amusing letter to Mrs. Barker. Writing on October 19, 1784, he tells her that he

[1] I write *Goldsmith*, because the lines are in "The Traveller"; but readers of Boswell will remember that Johnson claimed them for his own.

had been hoping to catch a sight of Blanchard in his balloon. So anxious was he not to miss this great phenomenon that he asked others to watch, and ate his dinner with his hat and surtout in readiness on a chair, lest he should be called out hurriedly. "At twenty minutes before three," he writes, with exquisite accuracy, "there was a cry in the street that the balloon was come." He ran into the orchard, where many neighbours had assembled, and saw the balloon like a speck at a great height. At first he thought it hardly moved; "but we soon discovered that its velocity was very considerable; for in a few minutes it was over the may-pole, and then over the Fox on my great parlour chimney, and in ten minutes more behind my great wall-nut tree." He adds that with the help of a telescope he could discern the boat, and the ropes by which it hung suspended; the balloon looked to him "no bigger than a large tea-urn." Finally, the "aerial philosopher" came safely to earth near Rumsey church, about five in the evening, having caused much commotion over a large part of Hampshire. On occasion, too, some little domestic mishap would be recorded. "We thank you," he once wrote, "for the salt fish, which proves more white and delicate than usual. Instead of in a parcel, the cod came down in a barrel, which, being leaky, let the brine out on the kitchen floor. I therefore told Thomas he should carry it into the cellar. Thomas,

without much thought, took the barrel by the hoops, down flew the barrel, out flew the head; in short, the stairs from top to bottom became one broken wet scene of barrel-staves and codfish."

Thus, ever happy because ever busy, White lived a life which deepened in serenity

WHITE'S GRAVE

as it neared its close. Ever face to face with Nature, he learned to love her as a bride indeed, whose features he studied daily, and whose kindly companionship he cherished more than aught else. Of the result of those studies I shall write in my next chapter. Living a blameless life, he saw continually its brighter side, nor have we any evidence that the scepticism of the age—the age of Wilkes and Paine and Hume—ever stirred him deeply. His faith was, as Locke would have said, well bottomed, and he asserted that faith on all occasions.

He seems to have agreed with Pope, whom he warmly admired, that "whatever is, is best"; he believed that a Divine Providence overrules every detail of life for man's ultimate good, and that we may rest assured, however blindly we may grope at times, that the believer will come at length to his desired haven—

> "Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
> Nor ever wind blows loudly."

Gilbert White died on June 26, 1793, after a short but painful illness. On his death-bed he repeated many passages of Scripture, dwelling with especial fervour on some sublime verses from the Book of Job. He was borne to his last resting-place on July 1, and buried by the Rev. Christopher Taylor, then Vicar of Selborne. Visitors to the church have sometimes mistaken the grave of White's grandfather for that of White himself, and Mr. Richard Le Gallienne's words, "You must walk over his plain stone if you would reach the altar-rail, and take the blessing of the place upon your knees," are incorrect. For White was buried in the fifth grave from the north wall of the chancel, counting at right angles with the wall, and the elaborate inscription to his memory in the chancel contrasts strongly with the simple letters on his half-sunken headstone:—

G. W.,
26TH JUNE,
1793.

CHAPTER V

"THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SELBORNE"

IN the year 1789 was published, by B. White & Sons, of London, a handsome illustrated quarto in boards, at the price of one guinea. The book was entitled, "The Natural History of Selborne, in the county of Southampton." From a bibliography compiled by Mr. Alfred Paterson, I find that the advance copies issued in the previous December were dated 1789; it has already been mentioned that the "Antiquities of Selborne" was bound up in the same volume. The "Natural History" comprised forty-four letters to Thomas Pennant, Esquire, and sixty-six letters to the Hon. Daines Barrington; the first nine letters bear no date; the tenth is dated August 4, 1767; the last, June 25, 1787. As regards the nine undated letters, the explanation offered by Grant Allen and others is, I take it, the true one. Briefly it is this: the two series were written, broadly speaking, side by side, and the interchange of correspondence between the three friends had proceeded for some time before White dreamed of publication. He presently found

that if he published these "communicated observations" in volume form, it would be necessary to preface them with some account of the general characteristics of the neighbourhood from which they were for the most part penned. So he threw such details into the form of nine introductory letters, which, as a matter of fact, were never sent to the person to whom they were ostensibly addressed. There is little doubt that these one hundred and ten letters, on the natural history of a Hampshire village, have enjoyed a larger circulation than those of any other Englishman.

To multitudes of readers, the work of White is the oldest book on natural history, written by an Englishman, which they have ever looked into—if, indeed, we except "The Compleat Angler," which can hardly be brought into the same category. For we must bear in mind that books treating of natural history in a popular manner form one of the youngest branches of our literature. To this there are exceptions, but those exceptions prove the rule. In the whole era of Elizabeth, for instance, we find hardly any works on natural history added to the common stock, and the few that were added are hardly ever read. Of books with which it may be fairly compared, "The Natural History of Selborne" is, I think, the oldest, as it is the most popular. Macaulay once gave a brief list of some books found in the homes of country gentlemen in the reign of Charles

the Second; had he been writing of his own lifetime he would surely have included the work of White.

It may be of interest to ask what books on natural history had appeared, either in England or on the Continent, during the half century that preceded the publication of White's volume. George Edwards, who was Librarian to the Royal College of Physicians, published four volumes in quarto on the "Natural History of Uncommon Birds," which appeared between 1743 and 1750. A few years later (1758–64), he put forward three more quartos as "Gleanings in Natural History." Scopoli, Professor of Botany at Pavia, wrote an *Introductio ad Historiam Naturalem*, which was published at Prague in 1777; he afterwards wrote other works, and was quoted by White in his title-page. The *Systema Entomologiæ* of J. C. Fabricius was issued at Leipsic in 1775; his *Species Insectorum* at Hamburg in 1781. Thomas Pennant—the Pennant of White's Letters—was considered by Swainson as the first who treated the natural history of Britain "in a popular and interesting style." His "British Zoology," in one volume folio, was published in London in 1766; his "Synopsis of Quadrupeds," in one volume octavo, at Chester in 1771; his "History of Quadrupeds" at London in 1793—the year of White's death. The publication of Bloch's *Ichthyologie, ou Histoire Naturelle générale*

et particulière des Poissons commenced at Berlin in 1785, and was completed in 1796. None of these books are read to-day by any except students of the history of scientific research. The chatty, informal, unpretentious work of White bids fair to reach its hundredth edition at no distant date.

"The Natural History of Selborne" may be regarded, from certain standpoints, as a stepping-stone between Pennant and Lamarck. Swainson's remark on Pennant —quoted above—is at least approximately correct; Lamarck, whose views were first published in 1801, was certainly, as Darwin pointed out, the first man whose conclusions on the subject of evolution excited much attention. In short, White came between the old naturalists who tabulated data, and those, his successors, who reasoned from collected data and strove to *explain*, as well as *describe*, the phenomena of organic life. To the knowledge of such men as Ray and Willoughby and Derham, whose works he knew well, he added his own untiring observations; but he theorised on items rather than subjects, and, when turning his pages, we see that he scarcely caught a glimpse of those biological truths which were soon to set the orthodox, both scientists and theologians, by the ears. I do not write this to White's detriment; I am merely suggesting his position in the history of biological observation. Taken on his own ground he is unrivalled; and we shall do well to

remember some words of Grant Allen's, penned shortly before his death: "I have lived myself for some years in White's own country, looking out daily upon Selborne and upon Wolmer Forest . . . and I have been every day more impressed by the depth and width of his knowledge, the accuracy of his observation, the candour of his mind, and the intimate acquaintance he possessed with the outer life of Nature in England."

The explanation of White's success lies in the fact that his whole life, however little he may have realised it, was one long preparation for the book that was to be. Whether at Oxford or at Selborne, whether visiting at Ringmer or journeying to or from London, his eye was ever watchful of the movements of birds, and his ear attentive to their song. He certainly made copious notes, and his "Naturalist's Calendar," compiled from 1768 to his death, was arranged and published by J. Aikin in 1795, and was included in the edition of the "Natural History," in two volumes octavo, published by J. White in 1802. To read through that Calendar is to see, at least in part, the secret of White's charm. White recognised the advantages to be derived from comparing notes with other naturalists; and while by no means despising books, he saw that the true naturalist is educated in the fields rather than in the library, and that what a man learns from his own observation he knows indeed. By using his own eyes

he formed reliable opinions, and, as Milton puts it in *Areopagitica*, "opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making." When reading White, we feel that we are present where knowledge is being made, or, to vary the phrase, that we are lingering in the laboratory rather than in the class-room. Example is better than precept.

Let us follow White in his wanderings—ignoring, for the moment, his ceaseless vigilance at home. We shall see, I think, that he shared the instincts of the true naturalist, deeming nothing beneath his notice, and no incident too trivial to be set down for his own use or communicated to a friend. Once, when at Oxford, he noticed a house-martin flying in the quadrangle of Christ Church, "so late as the 20th of November"; a fact so important in his eyes that he mentioned it to Pennant. He was accustomed, as a young man, to visit Sunbury-on-Thames; and, writing some ten years later, he related how he had seen myriads of swallows forsake the houses and chimneys in the evening to roost among the osiers by the riverside. When he learned that Pennant had procured a green lizard from Devonshire, he was pleased to recollect that many years before he had himself noticed this reptile on a sunny sandbank near Farnham. He told Daines Barrington that he had seen martins nesting in the Strand and Fleet Street, and that Bishop's Waltham was the only place known to him

where the sand martin haunted buildings: he further stated in a subsequent letter that the chalk pit, near Odiham, was the only place where he had seen swifts breed out of buildings. On March 9, 1772, he wrote to Daines Barrington merely to record that on the previous 4th of November, as he was walking on the sea-bank at Newhaven, "in pursuit of natural knowledge," he saw three house-swallows glide swiftly by. His jaunts into Sussex always impressed him deeply. He wrote a very interesting letter from Ringmer on October 8, 1770, saying that there were birds in that district almost unknown at Selborne; crossbills had haunted the pine-groves near the house where he was staying; the Cornish chough bred on the chalky cliffs of the neighbouring coast; he had seen "little parties of ring-ousels" on the downs between Chichester and Lewes; he added that there were bustards on the downs near Brighthelmstone, but did not say whether he saw any. Three years later, writing again from Ringmer, he described the Sussex downs as a "chain of majestic mountains," which he had known for nearly thirty years, and which he never beheld without admiration.

The style of White is unique. He has joined the ranks of those authors whom we read for their manner apart from their matter, be their matter good or bad. We do not read him because we credit his theory

of the hibernation of swallows, but because we relish the garrulous, urbane, unsophisticated way in which he chats to us upon the subject. On the whole, therefore, we may safely agree with Grant Allen that our interest in White's book is now chiefly literary. White has, of course, his limitations. Like Johnson, he could write trifles with dignity; but he knew little of the arts of impassioned prose, and, after due allowance for a later age, we cannot think of him as writing such studies—at once so tender and so strong—as the "Roman Brook" or "Meadow Thoughts" of Jefferies. But no criticism can imperil the charm of those letters to Pennant and Daines Barrington, or endanger their perennial interest; they would still be read were the whole *corpus* of critics to declaim against them unanimously. Moreover, it is a thankless task to criticise a book which has engaged the loving and learned services of an illustrious list of editors.

Of those editors a few words may be said. "The Natural History of Selborne" may be bought in almost every *format*, at prices varying from three pence to three guineas—and even more. Some editions have useful, and some useless, notes. Some include little more than White's text; others have brief prefaces which really serve to put the reader in touch with the author. Many have been handled by the present

writer, who remembers one wet evening very pleasantly spent in poring over the edition by the Rev. J. G. Wood, at the open window of Myrtle Cottage, under the very shadow of White's "long, hanging wood" —the beech-clad Hanger. Each succeeding generation has seen eminent biologists who have loved to reprint the book under their own care. The edition published in 1802, already mentioned, was edited by Markwick, who compiled his own Calendar at Catsfield, contemporaneously with White's; the two are often printed side by side. Editions by Sir William Jardine appeared in London and Edinburgh on four occasions, between 1829–33, and several times subsequently; that by Captain Thomas Brown was repeatedly reprinted between 1833 and 1880; in 1871 Professor Thomas Bell, a resident of Selborne, put forth an edition arranged for children; his more elaborate edition in two volumes quarto, with the letters to Marsham, and other letters till then unpublished, was issued by J. Van Voorst, of London, in 1877. Further, annotated editions have been prepared by Buckland, Lord Selborne, Harting, Dr. Bowdler Sharpe, Mr. Warde Fowler, and many others, and in 1901 the work was added to the "Temple Classics." There are persons who cannot see any merit in "The Natural History of Selborne," just as there are persons who cannot read "The Pilgrim's

Progress," "The Compleat Angler"—or Shakespeare. With such I am not concerned, being fully of one mind with Coleridge, who scribbled in his own copy the words, "this sweet, delightful book."

CHAPTER VI

ST. MARY'S CHURCH

IT has already been stated that there was a church at Selborne at the time of the Domesday Survey, then in the care of Radfredas the presbyter, of whom, so far as I can ascertain, we know nothing beyond the bare fact of his position here. Moreover, as is so often the case in ecclesiastical history, our knowledge of St. Mary's Church prior to Reformation times is exceedingly meagre. In fact, it is not easy to trace the history of its structure in such a way as to show how it became what it is to-day; we can but glean information here and there, remembering that we must follow the early topographers with caution, as few of them had any technical knowledge of architecture. Some features of general interest may be mentioned here.

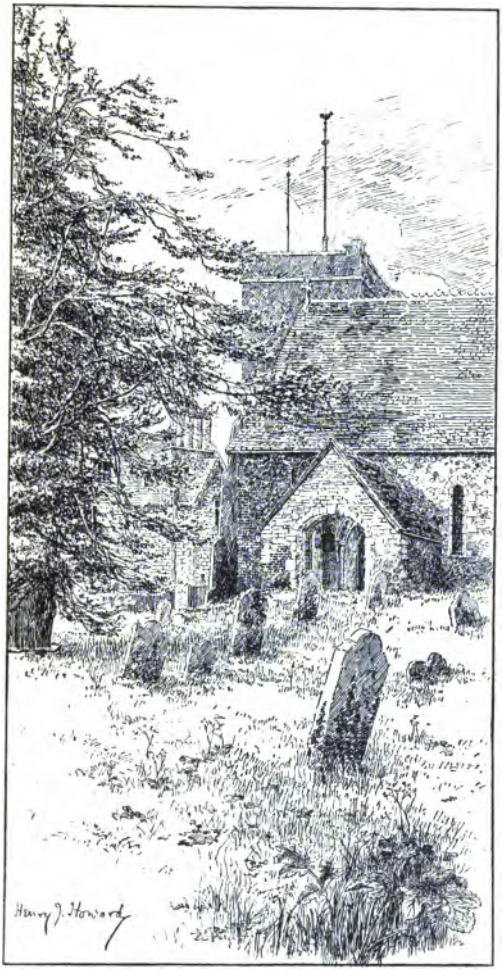
The brief description of Selborne church, given by White in the third and fourth letters of the "Antiquities," is very interesting; but Bell thought White's knowledge of ecclesiastical architecture so small that he added a long supplementary note to the third letter. As a whole, Bell regarded the structure as

Early English, and assigned the reign of Henry the Third as the period of its erection. Of the church then built he considered that a large portion survived in his day; but he writes of that portion as parts of "the original structure," although he admits that an earlier church existed, and his remarks are apt to prove perplexing unless read with care. Perhaps the oldest object existing to-day is the chalice-shaped font, which Dr. Cox thinks may date from the twelfth century. The church comprises nave and chancel, north and south aisles, north transept, tower, and south porch, with customary offices. The eastern end of the south aisle was formerly, as already mentioned, a chantry chapel, with a good triplet window and decorated niche; close by, in the south wall, is the piscina of the chapel-altar, which White describes as a "Gothic niche." Bell, in his note, remarks that White "makes the curious mistake of supposing that it formerly held a statue of some saint;" but this is hardly accurate, as White merely says that an image probably stood *near it*.

White believed the church—*i.e.* "the fabric in general"—to date from no earlier than the times of Henry VII. For this opinion, however, he gives no reasons, but admits the antiquity of the pillars of the nave arcade, which he supposes were found so massive and well preserved—even when the rest of the older church had fallen into

decay, that they were retained for the support of the new structure. He describes them as being of a "low, squat, thick order, usually called *Saxon*"; it is more correct to assign them to the period of transition, when the later Norman characteristics were gradually merged into those long known as Early English. Looking at them in the dim light of evening, they have impressed me with the same feeling of their immemorial antiquity as I have experienced when standing in the nave at Hemel Hempstead and elsewhere—the feeling that the builders of our older parish churches built for eternity rather than for time. Is it possible at such times to be insensible of the shortness of human life when compared with the durability of those pillars, that have looked down, generation after generation, century after century, upon the village folk who have gathered under their shadow to pray? Often enough, we can form no ideas regarding the remoteness of one age except by comparing it with another. In the south porch here at Selborne there lies a large slab. It bears the following inscription: "Here lyes the body of Alexander Bowsher, Gent, who Departed this life 3 May 1653." It is 250 years since he was brought here to his burial; but more than twice that period had then elapsed since those pillars were reared in the places where we see them now.

During the last few decades the church



SELBORNE CHURCH

has been much restored, and the aisles show many modern features; but Dr. Cox points out that the responds of the chancel arch are Norman; that although the chancel has been largely rebuilt, it still retains some thirteenth-century work, and that portions of the transept date from the fourteenth century. The pews are modern, surely far different from those existing in White's day, which, he wrote, "are of all dimensions and heights, being patched up according to the fancy of the owners." He mentions a few incidents in the history of the church that are very diverting. "In the middle aisle," he writes, "there is nothing remarkable; but I remember when its beams were hung with garlands in honour of young women of the parish reputed to have died virgins; and recollect to have seen the clerk's wife cutting, in white paper, the resemblances of gloves, and ribbons to be twisted into knots and roses, to decorate these memorials of chastity." He relates, too, that the north aisle had at one time a flat roof covered with lead; but a churchwarden, under pretence of mending the roof, stripped off the lead and sold it, after which he pocketed the money and ran away. He tells us that there were once three bells; these, being loud and "out of tune," were taken down in 1735 and recast into four; a fifth was subsequently added by Sir Simeon Stuart, grandfather to the Baronet alive when White wrote. The new peal

was celebrated by a village festival; the treble bell, fixed in the ground, bottom upward, was filled with punch by order of the donor, and each person present drank from it.

In the south aisles visitors will notice (unless recently removed) two stone coffin-lids. These, I believe, are the two mentioned by White as then lying on the floor of the transept, and which, even in his day, had no coffins beneath them, and had, he thought, obviously been brought from elsewhere. The sculpture upon one he describes as "a *discus*, with a cross on it, at the end of a staff or rod, the well-known symbol of a Knight-Templar." But why need these coffin-lids have been brought from elsewhere? Nothing is more likely than that two of the knights from the neighbouring preceptory were buried in the church; the fact that the coffins have not been traced counts for little, as the graves may have been obliterated during alterations, and the coffin-lids preserved as records. Perhaps White doubted whether these relics could be so old as to date from Edward II., in whose reign, as he points out, the Order of the Knights-Templars was dissolved; for he gives no other reason for his supposition that they were brought from "some part of a former church."

So much as regards White's notice of these interesting relics, and the reply which we might naturally make as to their origin

and position in his day. But the history of more recent investigations, related by Bell, throws much light on this question. In brief, the explanation seems to be this. The chantry chapel at the east end of the south aisle was, as we have seen, set apart for the use of Lady Ela Longspee, who died in the year 1300. In the ground once forming the floor of that chapel two stone coffins were discovered, each with a lid, and each containing the skeleton of a man. Moreover, in the transept, five stone coffin-lids have been found, all without coffins, but one of them corresponding exactly with one of the two coffins found in the floor of what was formerly the chantry. Now, it may reasonably be conjectured that after the death of Ela Longspee, the Knights-Templars obtained the chantry for their own use; there some of them were buried, and there, after many years, the graves were in part obliterated during alterations in the church, and the lids of the stone coffins carried across to the transept, where they helped to pave the floor. This, in the main, was Bell's explanation, and it is plausible enough. But it may be almost wholly erroneous, and we can only regard it as an interesting theory. In point of fact, such problems lend themselves to no certain solution, and it is as perilous to dogmatise about them as to dogmatise in regard to "leper-windows," "hagioscopes," or the orientation of churches.

There are numerous memorials to the White family. A tablet of much interest is on the wall near the organ; when last at Selborne I transcribed it for the use of readers:—

TO THE MEMORY OF

BENJAMIN WHITE, Esqre,

of the City of London, Bookseller,
who was born May 23rd, 1754,
and died May 10th, 1821.
He was a man of great general information,
and in their researches much consulted
by the literary men of his day;
of MARY WHITE, his wife,
who was born Dec. 10th, 1759,
and was buried at Ewelme, Oxon,
where she died March 24th, 1833;
of BENJAMIN WHITE, his son,
who was born Aug. 6th, 1766,
and died March 5th, 1807;
of THOMAS WHITE, his son,
who was born May 1st, 1788,
and died Nov. 25th, 1795;
as also of MARY WHITE, his sister,
who was born Aug. 13th, 1767,
and died Aug. 26th, 1839.

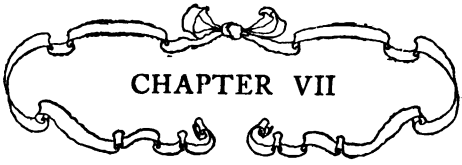
Beneath this tablet is the following statement:—

The immediate ancestors of the Whites, of Selbourne, according to the testimony of Anthony and Wood (M.S. F4, Fol. 155), sprung from the ancient family of White of South Warnborough, in this county.

The tablet to the memory of Gilbert White was for some years on the outer side

of the north wall of the chancel, but was removed inside the chancel, where it is still on the south wall. The inscription runs :—

In the fifth grave from this Wall are buried
the Remains of
The Rev^{d}· GILBERT WHITE, M.A.,
Fifty Years Fellow of Oriel College in Oxford,
and Historian of this his native Parish.
He was eldest son of John White, Esquire,
Barrister-at-Law,
and ANNE his Wife, only Child of
THOMAS HOLT, Rector of Streatham in Surrey;
which said JOHN WHITE was the only son of
GILBERT WHITE,
formerly vicar of this Parish.
He was kind and beneficent to his Relations,
Benevolent to the Poor,
and deservedly respected by all his Friends and
Neighbours.
He was Born July 18th, 1720, O.S.,
and Died June 26th, 1793.
Nec bono quicquam mali evenire potest, nec vivo,
nec mortuo.



CHAPTER VII

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

IN this chapter I shall bring together a few personal reminiscences of rambles in the neighbourhood of Selborne, hoping that by so doing I may write more clearly, and more from my own knowledge than would be possible were I to adopt any other plan. Readers will find that I have but touched my subject here and there; but they will understand readily enough that even the briefest allusion to each hamlet or village within a few miles radius from Selborne would fill such a book as this.

We all, I think, have vivid recollections of our first visit to any spot that we have long desired to see. As children, perhaps, we used to read of it in the old garret upstairs, where we passed so many pleasant hours in the company of those who never die. We need not name them; they are just, as Hazlitt puts it, "the old, everlasting set"—the men, we trust, whose books will be to our children what they have been to us. And White of Selborne was one of our early companions—so early that we cannot remember when we first felt a desire

to see Wolmer Pond, to climb the Hanger, or to linger among the lanes and fields where White "rode about in the winter, and saw such prodigious flocks of various kinds of birds."

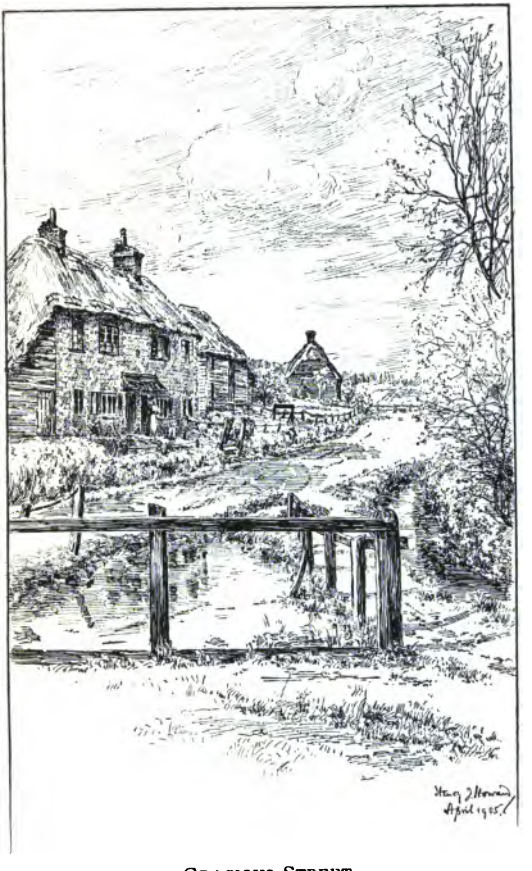
My own wishes in this matter were long unfulfilled, and I did not set eyes on Selborne

THE BUTCHER'S SHOP

until the summer of 1892. I had rambled from Guildford to Godalming; thence to the summit of breezy Hind Head; thence to Wolmer Forest, where I lost so much time watching the fritillaries flit over the bracken that I was nearly benighted in that very solitary district. I remember that it was late when I reached an inn near Kingsley, having come out of the forest on the wrong side—so late that it was already dusk, and I was warned that if I proceeded on foot to Selborne I might meet no living

soul, and should probably lose my road. But I was not greatly perturbed by these warnings, and found my way to Oakhanger, thence to a parting of the ways near Priory Farm, and presently, passing down a twisting road with steep banks on either side I found myself in Selborne Street somewhat suddenly at the last.

The neighbourhood of the forest then presented, I suppose, much the same aspect as it presents to-day, except that during the last few years some bungalows have been erected beside the wider cart-tracks, and both planting and felling have proceeded apace. No other tract of land with which I am acquainted, between Ringwood and London, is of such truly forestine character. I need hardly point out that I do not mean densely wooded country, but country reserved in past times for the chase. There are not many trees of large size in Wolmer Forest; nor were there in those days when, as we have seen, its warden was Sir Adam Gurdon; the trees are now mostly birch and Scotch fir of young growth. Over the whole district the sense of solitude is at times supreme. This has been noticed by Mr. Dewar, who writes: "A mystery seems to lurk about the lonely recesses of this forest. An even more desolate and unreclaimed spot it must have been in the days when the crane and the wild-boar and the wolf made its fastnesses their home; the names of these creatures still linger in the



GRACIOUS STREET

nomenclature of the ponds and the forest itself." Seedling birches flourish in great numbers in the light cone-strewn soil beneath the firs. The low banks on either side of the cart-tracks are artificial, consisting largely of peaty fragments, partly covered with heather and moss, gorse and bracken, and other plants. Firs, a few inches high, dot them here and there. I have gathered flowers in the forest which I did not recognise, and was unable to identify because they withered before I reached home. I find that sundew—round-leaved and long-leaved—grows in the bogs by Binn's pond, as also the creeping bilberry, rare elsewhere in Hampshire.

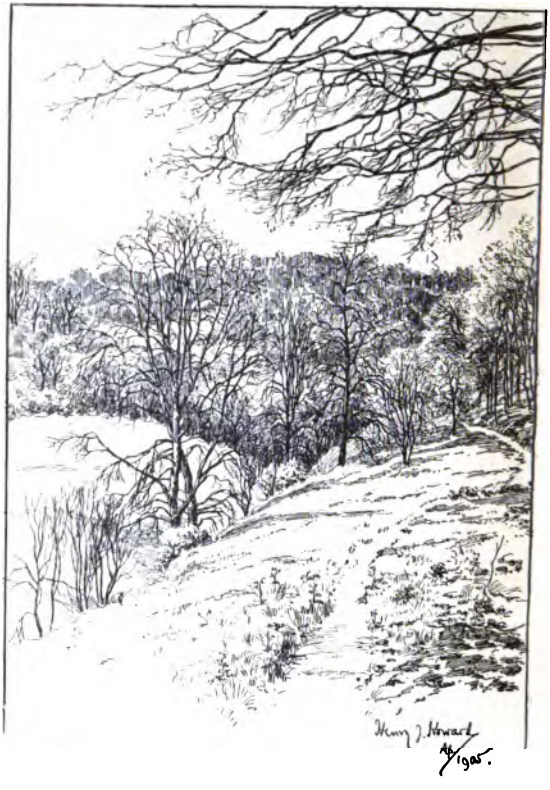
That night, after resting awhile and chatting with my hostess, I climbed the zig-zag by starlight, and stood on the spot whence White had so often looked down upon the village. As it was, I could see little but the tops of trees, and here and there a light in a cottage window, but I had reached Selborne at last, and was content. After awhile I wandered erratically upon the face of the Hanger, and presently, after having certainly trespassed on several private properties, I found myself in the garden of a cottage in Gracious Street. But the occupier proved civil, and afterwards we exchanged copious gossip at an inn in the village. Once upon a time our merchants transacted much business "across the walnuts and the wine," and to-day, if you would

gather rural tradition and folk-lore, you must condescend to linger where men talk and drink.

A later memory is of a ramble to Newton Valence, a charming spot of much interest. The little village lies between Selborne and East Tisted, and is said to owe its adjunct to the fact that in 1273 the Lord of the Manor was William de Valentin, half-brother to Henry III. The church of St. Mary, "with a thirteenth-century shell," says Dr. Cox, was restored in 1871; it contains on the north wall a brass memorial "in memory of the following children of this parish who died of diphtheria in the spring of 1871." The names of ten infants are given. The church overlooks much of the surrounding country, the walk from Selborne being a continual ascent. White doubtless regarded a journey to Newton Valence much as we now regard the ascent of an Alp, for we have seen how he venerated the "majestic mountains" of Sussex. His nephew, the Rev. Edmund White, was for many years vicar here, "just beyond the top of the down"—the down behind the Hanger, and a barometer, still preserved at the vicarage, was the subject of an interesting paragraph in one of White's letters to Daines Barrington: "The gentleman above mentioned has just fixed a barometer in his parlour at Newton Valence. The tube was first filled here (at Selborne) twice with care, when the mercury agreed and stood exactly with my

own; but, being filled twice again at Newton, the mercury stood, *on account of the great elevation of that house*, three-tenths of an inch lower than the barometers at this village, and so continues to do, be the weight of the atmosphere what it may. The plate of the barometer at Newton is figured as low as 27; because in stormy weather the mercury there will sometimes descend below 28." After other remarks regarding the comparison of barometers, White insists that the house at Newton Valence must be three hundred feet higher than that in which he was writing—presumably The Wakes. He also recorded that once, "on a misty day," the leaves of an oak, in the lane leading from Newton Valence to Selborne, dropped water so fast that 'the cart-way stood in puddles and the ruts ran with water,' though the ground in general was dusty."

How the sun shone down on Newton Lane, and how the orange-tip butterflies frolicked above the white stitchwort as I returned from Newton Valence! I think I never remember such heat in the month of May; the birds seemed more restful than usual—only the doves murmured and the cuckoo called almost incessantly from the neighbourhood of Coneycroft Hanger. The atmosphere is wonderfully clear on the Hampshire uplands, and you may distinctly see the larks rise from fields at a great distance, even though you cannot hear their song, as Jefferies elsewhere heard but could



IN THE WOODS

not see them, as he tells us in "The Pageant of Summer." Just before Newton Lane dips down towards Gracious Street I

caught a glimpse of Selborne as I leaned over a gate—a glimpse of towering green right ahead; below, a little to the left, the tower of St Mary's Church rose above blossoming fruit trees; in the foreground the stream twisted between banks yellow with buttercups, and whitish, too, with innumerable heads of dandelions, so lately yellow themselves. And I thought how, year after year, the birds sing and the flowers blow, and the sun looks down upon them all, whether any human soul appreciates their beauty or not. I remembered those lines of Tennyson's—as who would not under such circumstances?—that seem to voice so adequately the reflections prompted by the scene:—

"Unwatch'd, the garden bough shall sway,
The tender blossom flutter down;
Unloved, that beech will gather brown,
This maple burn itself away;

Unloved, the sunflower, shining fair,
Ray round with flames her disk of seed,
And many a rose-carnation feed
With summer spice the humming air;

Unloved, by many a sandy bar,
The brook shall babble down the plain,
At noon or when the lesser wain
Is twisting round the polar star;

Till from the garden and the wild
A fresh association blow,
And year by year the landscape grow
Familiar to the strangers' child."

Mention has been made in the second chapter of Dorton Woods, adjoining the

Long Lythe. I went through those woods for the first time very early in the morning, and heard the nightingale sing richly,—and the jays call so harshly that I wished them farther off. The yellow pimpernel blows here in unusual profusion, and together with the butterburs and celandines makes a bright contrast among the dog-violets and blue speedwell. Primroses and red campions add their colours to the general effect; the white petals of the stitchwort gleam above them all. Mr. Pearson has noticed the variety of underwood hereabouts — the spindle tree with its pink pods at autumn, the dogwood, the guelder rose, the purple-fruited elder. Beyond the woodland pathway is a hop-garden, then the road winds between high banks, one mass of blossom, until you reach a pond, white with frog-bit in early summer. Thence a short walk brings you to the wider expanse of Oakhanger pond, a neighbourhood from which several rare plants have been collected.

Faringdon, with its Early English church, should not be overlooked, if only because White was curate there for so many years, and his handwriting may be seen in the register. The village may be reached from the Alton road, as may also Chawton, where Jane Austen lived in a house which is still shown—a plain two-storey house of red brick. The church was burnt down some thirty years ago; that now standing was designed by Sir A. Blomfield, and contains

the monument to Sir Richard Knight (1679) which was brought from the old building. At Empshott, between Selborne and Liss, the church of the Holy Rood should be visited, although its architectural history, as Dr. Cox points out, was much confused by its restoration in 1859, when the beautiful chancel screen was removed to the west end.

THE END

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